

# New Connections

HELPING YOU FIND YOUR WAY AFTER TREATMENT



Issue 22

## Is it possible to prepare for recurrence?



When treatment ends, people begin a new chapter in their lives—one that can bring hope and happiness. It can also bring that nagging worry that the cancer will come back. Common though this emotion may be, if it is prolonged or interferes with daily living, it can jeopardize your health in the future. That’s why it’s important to acknowledge the fear and take steps to minimize it.

There are a number of steps the American Cancer Society recommends, and a link to a more thorough list is provided at the end of this article. Among these steps is the unexpected one of being proactive and actually *preparing* for recurrence. (yes, it is possible).

### Prepare for recurrence

Planning for recurrence is not the same thing as *expecting* recurrence. It doesn’t mean giving in to the possibility or accepting inevitability, it means being prepared. This is good advice for anyone, not just cancer survivors.

### Keep your health insurance

As you are now aware, having cancer can be very expensive and it can have a serious impact on your finances. Even if finances are tight right now, keep your health insurance if at all possible. In most cases, your cancer will not return, but you will still need regular follow-up care for a number of years.

### Keep your follow-up visits with your doctor

While there is no guarantee that seeing your doctor regularly will keep the cancer from coming back, it will allow you to catch a recurrence as early as possible. As you probably know, the earlier cancer is found, the better it responds to treatment. Plus, one of the greatest benefits you’ll get from follow-up visits to your doctor is peace of mind.

### Take the tests your doctor suggests

There may be tests you’ll need to have as part of your follow-up care, and it might be tempting to avoid some of these tests. After all, if you’ve just completed treatment, you may be tired of being a “cancer patient.” That’s understandable, but not wise. These follow-up tests will help your doctor be sure that you remain in remission (without evidence of disease).

### Be vigilant

This, of course, does not mean being obsessive. In fact, it means practicing the same kind of vigilance recommended for anyone, not just a cancer survivor. Being aware of any unusual symptoms or changes in your physical health is always a good practice. If you do notice any of the following problems or any other issues that trouble you, tell your doctor promptly, just as you would if you had never had cancer.

- A return of your cancer-specific symptoms, such as a lump or new growth where your cancer first started
- Persistent new or unusual pain that seems unrelated to an injury
- A weight loss you were not striving for
- Bleeding or unexplained bruising
- A rash or allergic reaction, such as swelling or severe itching or wheezing
- Chills or fevers
- Persistent headaches
- Shortness of breath
- Blood in your stool or urine
- Lumps, bumps, or swelling
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite, or trouble swallowing
- A cough that doesn't go away

For a more in-depth discussion of the fear of recurrence, click [here](#).

**For more cancer information, call 1-800-ACS-2345  
or visit [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org), anytime, day or night.**

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